

Message Text

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R 201613Z MAY 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

CINCPAC HONO HI

S E C R E T STATE 117267

E.O. 11652: XGDS - 3

TAGS: MARR, SN, NZ

SUBJECT: U.S. ACCESS TO SINGAPORE NAVAL FACILITIES

REF: SINGAPORE 1774 AND PREVIOUS.

1. IN HIS RECENT TALKS IN WASHINGTON, NZ PRIME MINISTER ROWLING INDICATED THAT NEW ZEALAND WAS NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT TAKING OVER MANAGEMENT OF NAVAL FACILITIES IN SINGAPORE AFTER THE BRITISH LEAVE. ROWLING INDICATED THAT HIS RELUCTANCE WAS BASED ON WHAT HE UNDERSTOOD TO BE PRIME MINISTER LEE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD NEW ZEALAND MANAGEMENT OF SENOKO REFUELING DEPOT AND ASSOCIATED FACILITIES, I.E.,

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THAT LEE PREFERS TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH U.S. ON THIS MATTER

AND THAT BRITISH DEPARTURE REMOVES SINGAPORE NAVAL FACILITIES FROM FIVE POWER DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT. WHEN ASKED, ROWLING SAID THAT IF LEE WERE WILLING TO ACCEPT NEW ZEALAND MANAGEMENT, NEW ZEALAND WOULD RECONSIDER ITS POSITION.

2. IN CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER LEE ON SAME SUBJECT AT DOD ON MAY 9, LEE INDICATED THAT HE DID NOT WANT DIRECT ARRANGEMENT WITH U.S. BECAUSE THIS WOULD CAUSE HIM POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND MIGHT ALSO RAISE PROBLEM IN U.S. HE SAID HE WOULD BE AGREEABLE TO SOME SORT OF ANZUS COVER FOR THE FACILITIES AND URGED US TO WORK IT OUT UNDER THAT RUBRIC.

IF THIS COULD NOT BE DONE, HE SAID, U.S. NAVY WOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE EASY ACCESS TO SINGAPORE BUT THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE ON A NORMAL COMMERCIAL BASIS.

3. BELIEVE GNZ BY NOW HAS HAD AMPLE TIME TO STUDY OUR PROPOSAL AND DISCUSS IT WITH GOS, AND PROBABLY HAS ALREADY REACHED DECISION. IN VIEW INDICATIONS IN REFTEL AND CONVERSATION WITH ROWLING CITED PARA ONE THAT GNZ TAKING NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS PROPOSAL, WE WOULD LIKE TO RESOLVE QUESTION OF NEW ZEALAND ROLE SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THAT WE MAY CONSIDER OTHER OPTIONS IF NECESSARY WHILE THEY ARE STILL OPEN.

4. IN VIEW TIME FACTOR AND RELATED CONSIDERATIONS, WE BELIEVE BEST PLACE TO RAISE MATTER WITH GNZ IS HERE IN WASHINGTON. ACCORDINGLY, ASSUMING NO OBJECTION FROM ADDRESSEES, DEPARTMENT INTENDS REQUEST EARLY MEETING WITH NEW ZEALAND AMBASSADOR (WHO WAS PRESENT DURING ROWLING'S ABOVE-MENTIONED WASHINGTON TALKS) TO INQUIRE ABOUT GNZ RESPONSE TO OUR PROPOSAL THAT IT ASSUME MANAGEMENT OF SENOKO FUEL DEPOT AND RELATED BERTHS UPON UK WITHDRAWAL. WE WILL ADVISE HIM OF LEE'S COMMENTS TO US INDICATING PREFERENCE FOR THIRD-COUNTRY MANAGEMENT OF THESE FACILITIES. INGERSOLL

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